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MORE THAN 60 PERCENT OF IDAHO SCHOOLS MEET ACADEMIC GOALS

BOISE – More than 60 percent of Idaho schools met the high academic bar set by the state again this year.

This is the second consecutive year that 62 percent of Idaho schools have met Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP), an academic benchmark that states are required to set and report every year under the federal No Child Left Behind law. AYP is calculated based on results of the Idaho Standards Achievement Tests (ISAT). The ISAT measures reading, mathematics and language usage in grades 3-8, and science in grades 5, 7 and 10.

“When you realize that these schools must have at least 85 percent of students proficient in reading and at least 83 percent of students proficient in mathematics to meet Adequate Yearly Progress, these are remarkable results, especially in these tough economic times,” said Superintendent of Public Instruction Tom Luna. “While I am pleased with this progress, I know we must do better to truly prepare every student for the 21st century. We will build on these successes through the Students Come First reform laws to ensure every child has access to the best possible education.”

To make AYP, a school must meet the student achievement goals – or proficiency targets – set by the Idaho State Board of Education in 41 different target areas during a given school year. The 41 targets include students in the entire school, students with disabilities, students with limited English proficiency and students who are economically disadvantaged.

Idaho kept its proficiency targets for the 2010-2011 school year at 85.6 percent in reading and 83 percent in math the same as the previous year as it works toward creating a growth model for accountability. These targets are still some of the highest in the nation. The U.S. Department of Education and the State Board of Education agreed to Idaho’s proposal on Friday.

Right now, AYP is based on proficiency, or the number of students who pass the ISAT in reading, mathematics and language usage. Idaho and other states had hoped the reauthorization of No Child Left Behind would allow for a growth model by now because academic growth is a better measure of progress. However, since reauthorization is now four years overdue, Idaho has decided to work toward a new model of accountability that takes academic growth into account.

Superintendent Luna will begin this work with local school districts and the State Board in the coming year. For AYP results by school and district, visit <http://www.sde.idaho.gov/> and click on “2011 AYP Results.”

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Here are a few examples of the many success stories we have seen across Idaho this year:

Teton County School District: In the Teton County School District, four schools made AYP this year, including Teton High School and Victor Elementary School. The district has attributed this success to many factors, including its partnership with the State Department of Education in the Idaho Capacity Building Project and Idaho Math Initiative. “Data analysis is ongoing at all levels with teachers, administrators and the school board. Also, the state focus team visits allow us to showcase our successes, and verify areas to improve upon, like continually checking for instruction to be aligned to the state standards,” said Monte Woolstenhulme, superintendent of Teton County schools.

Jefferson Middle School in Caldwell School District: In Caldwell, Jefferson Middle School made AYP for the first time ever, completing a dramatic turnaround. Jefferson was identified by the State Department of Education as a “persistently lowest-achieving” school for three years running just one year ago. Caldwell administration applied for and won a School Improvement Grant from the federal government to start the dramatic turnaround. The grant, nearly \$700,000 over three years, is being devoted to technology for students and staff, professional development and other educational enhancements. New leadership was put into place to start the 2010-11 school year –Assistant Superintendent Randy Schrader became the interim principal and Moss Strong was appointed vice principal –and in just one year, huge academic improvements were made in all 41 AYP categories. “You can do amazing things when everyone works together to achieve shared goals,” Schrader said. “The students worked just as hard as the staff and I'm extremely proud.”

Murtaugh Middle School in Murtaugh School District: Murtaugh Middle School was identified as one of Idaho’s persistently lowest-achieving schools in the state in 2010, but made AYP this year. “We are so proud of the staff and students at Murtaugh Middle School. With hard work and dedication, the students exceeded the necessary requirements and achieved 90% proficient in math and 97% proficiency in reading,” said Michele Capps, superintendent of Murtaugh School District. “Although we are excited to move toward a growth model, this level of proficiency is a great reason to celebrate success!” Murtaugh Elementary and the school district also met all AYP goals.

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